International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE)
ISSN: 2278-3075 (Online), Volume-9 Issue-2, December 2019

Household Level Impact Assessment of MGNREGA Scheme

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Abstract: ***The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) has been notified by the Government of India on 7th September 2005 with the primary objective of enhancing the livelihood security of the unskilled labors in the rural areas of the country by providing guaranteed wage employment to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA, which is one of the flagship projects of the government, promises 100 days of work per year to the unemployed at a CPI inflation-indexed wage rate. As there is an increase in the disposable income on account of the implementation of the scheme, it is expected that the standard of living and the expenditure pattern of the household covered under the MGNREGA scheme would undergo a tremendous change. As most of the expenditure of the rural households covered under the scheme is supposed to be drastically changed, it is felt that there is a need to study the impact of the scheme on these households.***

This paper is an extract from a Ph. D Thesis titled Household and Village Level Impact of MGNREGS on Governance at the Grassroots: An Assessment of Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu. Submitted to the Gandhigram Rural Institute – Deemed to be University.

Keywords: MGNREGS, Household, Impact, Evaluation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) has been notified by the Government of India on 7th September 2005 with the primary objective of enhancing the livelihood security of the unskilled labors in the rural areas of the country by providing guaranteed wage employment to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA, which is one of the flagship projects of the government, promises 100 days of work per year to the unemployed at a CPI inflation-indexed wage rate. As there is an increase in the disposable income on account of the implementation of the scheme, it is expected that the standard of living and the expenditure pattern of the household covered under the MGNREGA scheme would undergo a tremendous change.

Revised Manuscript Received on December 30, 2019.

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As most of the expenditure of the rural households covered under the scheme is supposed to be drastically changed, it is felt that there is a need to study the impact of the scheme on these households.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical and analytical in nature and it is based on the primary and secondary sources. The study uses mixed method of research techniques to evaluate the impact of MGNREGA on the households at the grassroots. The mixed method of research techniques contains quantitative as well as qualitative approach to articulate the research problem. These techniques have helped the researcher to get facts very rigorously from the field. Data pertinent to household were collected from all the MGNREGA beneficiaries through a well-structured interview schedule. The structured interview schedule contains a set of questions which guide the researcher to collect information about the research problem. The questions were prepared to obtain answers from the respondents in the fields as accurate and correct as possible.

a. Quantitative Survey of the Research

The quantitative survey was divided into two parts: (i) Interview schedule for beneficiaries of MGNREGS, (ii) Interview schedule for non-beneficiaries of MGNREGS.

b. Source of Data Collection

The primary data for the present study was drawn from 600 household respondents (300 beneficiary households and 300 non-beneficiary households) from three districts of Tamil Nadu - Dindigul, Karur and Theni Districts. Non-beneficiary households were purposively selected on the basis of suggestions and recommendation given by beneficiary household respondents as well as in consultation with panchayat administration in the selected villages.

c. Statistical Tool

The analysis was done with the help of SPSS and some statistical methods were adopted to get the results which were analysed. The independent sample t-test was used to testing hypothesis that determines significant difference between the means of two independent samples. The tests revealed how the MGNREGS creates an impact on the household level, village level and at the quality of governance at different levels.

d. Sample Design

The present study adopted a random sampling method for the survey.

In the first stage of the sampling, the district was selected on the basis of the phase wise implementation of MGNREGS. The districts Dindigul, Karur and Theni were selected for study. Dindigul district was a first phase of implementation of NRGEA in 2006, the Karur district was a second phase of implementation at 2007 and Theni district was a third phase district at 2008 in the Tamil Nadu. The selection of households as respondents of a cross- section of the village Panchayats covered in this study.

e. Block Diagram

Fig. 1. Map of the Study Area

f. Objectives of the Research

The overall aim of the present study is to assess the household impacts of MGNREGA on development process at the grassroots.

g. Research Hypothesis

Higher the level of positive impacts of MGNREGS on household and village level, better will be the Governance and Development outcomes at the grassroots in terms of effectiveness, equity and sustainability; Reduction of Poverty and Vulnerability; Generation of employment; and Empowerment of women in decision making.

III. RESULT ANALYSIS

Table - I: Frequency and Percentage distribution of Respondents by Social, Economic and Demographic Characteristics

		Non-Beneficiaries		Beneficiaries	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Age	18 to 25	24	8.0	27	9.0
	26 to 36	106	35.3	130	43.3
	37 to 47	129	43.0	105	35.0
	47 to 60	29	9.7	28	9.3
	above 60	12	4.0	10	3.3
Community	SC	56	18.7	150	50.0
	OBC	244	81.3	150	50.0
Marital Status	Married	269	89.7	279	93.0
	Unmarried	1	0.3	1	0.3
	Separated	3	1.0	19	6.3
	Widow	27	9.0	1	0.3
Religion	Hindu	209	69.7	204	68.0
	Muslim	31	10.3	19	6.3
	Christian	60	20.0	77	25.7
Education	Illiterate	73	24.3	72	24.0
	1st to 5th	83	27.7	30	10.0
	5th to 10th	91	30.3	110	36.7
	11th to 12th	46	15.3	88	29.3
	UG	7	2.3	0	0.0
BPL card holding	Yes	0	0.0	300	100.0
	No	300	100.0	0	0.0
Ration card color	Red	156	52.0	178	59.3
	Blue	141	47.0	121	40.3
	No ration card	3	1.0	1	0.3

Land Ownership	Landless	18		3.0	
	Less than 10 cents	380		63.3	
	10 - 49 cents	175		29.2	
	50 - 99 cents	19		3.2	
	More than 100 cents	8		1.3	
Type of houses	Kuthca house	84		14.0	
	Hut house	6		1.0	
	IAY house	42		7.0	
	Pucca House	468		78.0	
Source of drinking water	Public	142		23.7	
	Own	352		58.7	
	Neighbours	106		17.7	

Source: computed – Field Data

Hypothesis – 1: There is no significant difference in income pattern between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households before the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme.

Table - II: Independent sample t-test of significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of monthly income before MGNREGA Scheme implementation

	Respondent	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Monthly Income	Non-Beneficiaries	9299.66	11.694	597	0.000*
	Beneficiaries	3403.70			

Source: Computed

**significant at 5 per cent level*

Table II presents the result of independent sample t-test of significant difference between beneficiaries of MGNREGA Scheme and non-beneficiaries in terms of monthly income before the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme. The value of monthly income as shown in the table above stood at 0.000, which is less than 0.05 thereby rejecting the null hypothesis at 5 percent level of significance. The mean score also shows a huge difference in monthly income between non-beneficiaries (9299.66) and beneficiaries (3403.70). Based on these results, it was concluded that there is a significant difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households in terms of monthly income before the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme.

Testing Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in consumption pattern between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households with the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme.

Table - III: Independent sample t-test of significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of Consumption Expenditure Pattern after MGNREGA Scheme implementation

Expenditure pattern	Respondent	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)

Food	Non Beneficiaries	2395.33	-3.008	522.510	0.003*
	Beneficiaries	2660.83			
Children's Education	Non Beneficiaries	360.03	-2.698	300.389	0.007*
	Beneficiaries	2127.83			
Fuel and electricity	Non Beneficiaries	434.57	-6.089	365.844	0.000*
	Beneficiaries	623.91			
Tobacco, Alcohol and gambling	Non Beneficiaries	60.33	-.323	598	0.746
	Beneficiaries	68.33			
Entertainment	Non Beneficiaries	50.17	1.386	536.456	0.166
	Beneficiaries	32.33			
Cosmetics and Toiletries	Non Beneficiaries	16.67	.044	598	0.965
	Beneficiaries	16.33			
Clothing	Non Beneficiaries	1171.00	-1.619	593.981	0.106
	Beneficiaries	1522.67			
Medical	Non Beneficiaries	722.33	-1.151	598	0.250
	Beneficiaries	1014.20			
Transport	Non Beneficiaries	266.00	-1.824	598	0.069
	Beneficiaries	338.63			
Festivals, religious and ceremonies	Non Beneficiaries	109.84	-.880	598	0.379
	Beneficiaries	142.71			
House maintenance	Non Beneficiaries	5.00	-.278	598	0.781
	Beneficiaries	6.67			
Interest on loans and debts	Non Beneficiaries	284.00	-.827	598	0.408
	Beneficiaries	366.75			
	Beneficiaries	5.00			

Source: Computed

**Significant at 5 per cent level*

The null hypothesis was statically tested and accepted in the case of 9 out of 12 consumption expenditures presented in table III. The p value for expenses on tobacco, alcohol and gambling stood at 0.74, which is greater than 0.05 thereby accepting the null hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance. Most of female respondents (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) said their husbands have drinking habits. The p value for entertainment expenses stood at 0.16, which is also greater than 0.05 thereby accepting the null hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance. Similarly, the p value for expenses on cosmetics and toiletries, clothing, medical, transport, festivals and religious ceremonies, household maintenance, and interest on loans and debts stood at 0.965, 0.106, 0.250, 0.069, 0.379, 0.781, and 0.408 respectively, which are all greater than 0.05 thereby accepting the null hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance in the case of all these indicators. The scheme has been able to put money in the hands of the poorest of the poor on a scale that is unprecedented. It created a multiplier effect and stimulated the rural economy. Beneficiaries have started spending the increased income from MGNREGA Scheme on many different things which they could not afford before.

Interestingly, we can also see from table 3 above that the mean score for beneficiary respondents is even higher compared to those of non-beneficiary respondents in the case of expenditure incurred on children's education, food and fuel plus electricity consumption. The mean score for expenditure incurred by beneficiaries on children's education (2127.83) was significantly much higher than those of non-beneficiaries (360.03). Similarly, the mean score for beneficiaries on food expenses (2660.83) was higher than those of non-beneficiaries (2395.33) and the mean score for expenditure incurred by beneficiaries on fuel and electricity consumption (623.91) was also higher than those of non-beneficiaries (434.57). Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there is a significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of expenditure on education, food and fuel plus electricity consumption. Majority of beneficiary respondents were spending the increased income from MGNREGA Scheme on children's education followed by food basket and fuel plus electricity consumption. This expenditure pattern is interesting. It shows that the increased income from the MGNREGA Scheme is being spent for improving the quality of life and human development related issues. From the table analysis, it was clear that the MGNREGA Scheme has truly enhanced the livelihood security of the rural households.

Testing Hypothesis – 3: There is no significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of assets creation.

Table - IV: Independent sample t-test of significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of assets creation

	Respondent		Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Livestock	Non-Beneficiaries		0.41	-1.851	521.297	0.065
	Beneficiaries		0.29			
Household assets	Non-Beneficiaries		6.52	1.072	598	0.284
	Beneficiaries		6.44			

Source: computed

**Significant 5 percent level*

Table IV presents the result of independent sample t-test for significant difference between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of assets creation. As far as livestock is concerned, the p value stood at 0.05, which is greater than 0.05 thereby accepting the null hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance. Mean score for non-beneficiaries stood at 0.41 and that of beneficiaries at 0.29, which also reflect an insignificant difference. Based on these results, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of livestock assets creation. In other words, MGNREGA Scheme has had no bearings on livestock assets creation. In fact, it is the Government of Tamil Nadu, which plays a more significant role here. Freebies under Tamil Nadu livestock schemes had significant impacts on livestock assets creation. As far as household assets creation is concerned, the p value stood at 0.284, which is also much greater than 0.05 thereby accepting the null hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance. Mean score for non-beneficiaries stood at 6.52 and that of beneficiaries at 6.44 which also reflect a very insignificant difference. Based on these results, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of household assets creation.

Table - V: Percentage distribution of Respondents based on Livestock Assets

Life stock	Non Beneficiaries		Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Buffalo	12	4.0	3	1.0
Cow	30	10.0	24	8.0
Bullock	2	0.7	0	0.0
Goat	35	11.7	24	8.0
Sheep	1	0.3	2	0.7
Pig	1	0.3	0	0.0
Poultry	40	13.3	34	11.3
Others	1	0.3	0	0.0

Source: Computed

Table - VI: Percentage distribution of Respondents based on Household Assets

Household assets	Non-Beneficiaries		Beneficiaries	
	N	%	N	%
Grinder	300	100.0	300	100.0
Mixie	300	100.0	300	100.0
LPG connection	260	86.7	272	90.7
Television	300	100.0	300	100.0
Air conditioner	6	2.0	0	0.0
Fans	300	100.0	300	100.0
Personal Computer	25	8.3	14	4.7
Cell Phone	293	97.7	290	96.7
Cart	0	0.0	1	.3
Cycle	65	21.7	59	19.7
Two wheeler	77	25.7	76	25.3
Three wheeler	18	6.0	18	6.0
Car	8	2.7	0	0.0
Tractor	3	1.0	0	0.0
Tiller	0	0.0	0	0.0
Others	2	0.7	1	.3

Source: Computed

Testing Hypothesis – 4: There is significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in terms of migration.

Table - VII: Chi-square test of significant difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households in terms of migration after the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme

Household Respondents	Members migrated from Households		Total	Chi-Square Value	P – value
	Yes	No			
Non-Beneficiaries	26 (8.7)	274 (91.3)	300	10.102	0.002*
Beneficiaries	8 (2.7)	292 (97.3)	300		
Total	**34 (5.7)**	**566 (94.3)**	**600**		

*Note: The parentheses () refers to the percentage, * significant at 5 per cent level*

Source: Computed

Table VII presents the chi-square test result for significant difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households in terms of migration after the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme. The P value stood at 0.002, which is less than 0.05, thereby, rejecting the hypothesis at 5 per cent level of significance. Based on this result, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary household in terms of migration after the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme. Effective implementation of MGNREGA Scheme has led to ample opportunities for the rural households in the villages under investigation in the present study. It has enhanced the lives of the poor beneficiary households by helping them generate more livelihood options from their immediate surroundings by making works available to everyone, preferably, women and aged, within a 5 km radius. This has arrested migration of poor households from one place to another searching for works.

Table - VIII: Household wise classification of migration

		Non-Beneficiaries		Beneficiaries	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Migration of family members	Yes	26	8.7	8	2.7
	No	274	91.3	292	97.3
Reasons for migration	No Migration	274	91.3	292	97.3
	Seeking employment	13	4.3	6	2.0
	Better wage earning	5	1.7	0	0.0
	Better amenities	1	.3	0	0.0
	Children education	1	.3	0	0.0
	Go with son /daughter	6	2.0	2	.7
Number of	Not applicable	274	91.3	292	97.3

members migrated	One Member	23	7.7	8	2.7
	Two Members	2	.7	0	0.0
	Three Members	1	.3	0	0.0
Place to migrate for work	Not applicable	274	91.3	292	97.3
	Other district	14	4.7	4	1.3
	Other state	11	3.7	4	1.3
	Abroad	1	.3	0	0.0

Source: Computed

Outcome of the MGNREGS on beneficiary households

This section assessed the outcome of MGNREGA Scheme on beneficiary households in terms of financial situation, savings, and food security. It attempts to present an overview of beneficiary's livelihood conditions.

Table - IX: Distribution of Respondent's most preferred Financial Institution for Savings

Savings	Frequency	Percent
Commercial Bank	204	68.0
Cooperative Bank	6	2.0
Post office	22	8.0
SHG	60	20.0
Chit Fund	8	2.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Source: Computed

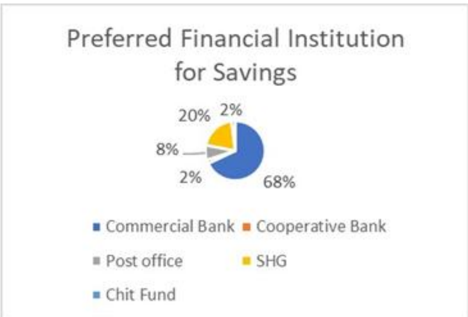

Fig. 2. Preferred Financial Institutions for Savings

Table IX presents the percentage distribution of respondents in terms of their savings in financial institutions. As per MGNREGA guidelines, bank account should be opened for every job card holder under Know Your Customers (KYC)[1] with valid documentation for direct wage payment method. The table above shows that 100 per cent of beneficiary household respondents working under MGNREGA Scheme have savings account with financial institutions. Whereas 68 per cent of the beneficiary household respondents have savings account with commercial bank, only 20 per cent have savings account with SHGs, 8 per cent with Post Office and 2 per cent each with Chit Fund and Cooperative Bank. Therefore, MGNREGA Scheme has ensured financial inclusion and social empowerment of beneficiary households. Savings in financial institutions provided them with a formal means of saving their money, earning some interest and most importantly, boosted their self-confidence.

Table - X: Distribution of beneficiary household respondents in terms of Debt Owed

Debt.	Borrowing methods						Total	Percentage
	Relatives and Friends	Bank	Money lenders	SHG	Cooperative bank	No debt		
Yes	72	24	78	48	36	0	258	86.0
No	0	0	0	0	0	42	42	14.0
Total							**300**	**100.0**

Source: Computed

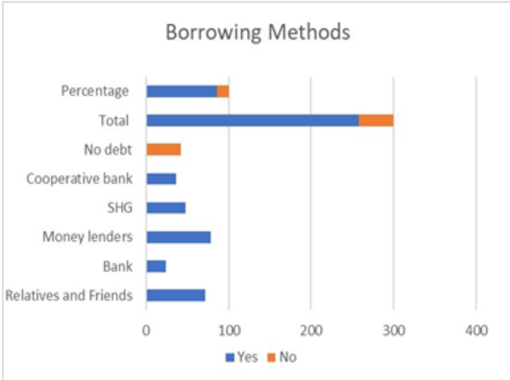

Fig. 3. Details of Borrowing Methods

Table X presents the percentage distribution of beneficiary respondents in terms of debt they owe. As the table show, an overwhelming majority (86%) of the beneficiary household respondents are reported to have owed debt to relatives, friends, moneylenders, SHG and bank. Just 14 per cent of the beneficiary household respondents are reported to have been debt free.

Table - XI: Distribution of beneficiary household respondents in terms of Debt Repayment

Sl. No.	Repayment mode	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	MGNREGS wage income	128	43.0
2	Rotation from other work income	78	26.0
3	Selling or hypothecated jewels	36	12.0
4	Selling or hypothecated property (land and house)	16	5.0
5	No debt	42	14.0
Total		**300**	**100.0**

Source: Computed

The table XI presents the percentage distribution of beneficiary household respondents in terms of debt repayment.

[1] Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (2013), Operation Guidelines -2013, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

As the table above show, 43 per cent of beneficiary household respondents are reported to have been clearing their debt with income from MGNREGA and 26 per cent of beneficiary household respondents are reported to have been repaying their debt fully through borrowings money from moneylenders or through their additional work income and 17 per cent of beneficiary household respondents have cleared their debt by hypothecating jewels or by selling their property.

Table - XII: Distribution of beneficiary household respondents in terms of food availability and food consumption in their home

Sl. No	Food situation at home	Total No. of Respondents	%
1	Always eat enough of what we want	294	98.0
2	Eat enough but not always eat what we would like	6	2.0
Total		**300**	**100**

Source: Computed

Table XII presents the percentage distribution of beneficiary respondents in terms of food availability and food consumption in their home. An overwhelming majority (98%) of the beneficiary household respondents are reported to have said that they had enough food in their home and also, they ate what they want in their home. Only 6 of the 300 respondents (2%) said they did not have enough food in their house. On further inquiry, it was found that household respondents minimized their food consumption to two times a day (morning and night). However, once they started having children, their food consumption (both in terms of quantity and quality) changes.

Table - XIII: Distribution of beneficiary household respondents by … whether they actually got as much works under MGNREGS Scheme

Sl. No	As much work wanted	Total No of respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	108	36.0
2	No	192	64.0
Total		**300**	**100.0**

Source: Computed

Table XIII shows the percentage distribution of beneficiary household respondents in terms whether they got as much works as they wanted under MGNREGA Scheme. 36 per cent of the household respondents responded affirmatively whereas 64 per cent responded negatively to the question as to whether they got as much works under MGNREGA as they wanted. Many of the surveyed village household members stated that they want more number of working days under MGNREGS but could not happened because of the larger number of population in hamlets and villages. The village panchayats are reducing the allocation of work under MGNREGS because of overpopulation. On further inquiry, it was found that panchayats have allotted works based on the application of the beneficiaries, but sometimes the number of applications received will be high and at the same time it was felt that equal chance should be given to every household to work under MGNREGS. Therefore, the household members are not getting as much work as they wanted to work under MGNREGS.

IV. CONCLUSION

The household level impact of MGNREGA Scheme in the six villages panchayats investigated across the three districts in the present study can be viewed in terms of the extent to which it has come to have a bearing on the rural poor households in those six villages. MGNREGA was able to dignify labour work in the village, and provided purchasing power among the rural households. When these poor households spend this additional money, they create a demand for commodities. The production of these commodities, in turn, creates demand for capital, raw materials and workers. This multiplier effect is reflected in the expansion of business and commercial activities in and around the villages. Beneficiaries have also spent the additional income on better quality of life and human development related issues. The MGNREGA work has enhanced the bargaining power of the rural households in negotiating their wages in the open market. Moreover, as income increases, consumption expenditures also increased in beneficiary households. Additional income from MGNREGA has brought about change in the food consumption in beneficiary households. Fruits, vegetables and dairy products have been added into the food basket of beneficiary households. The scheme also ensured social empowerment and financial inclusion of rural households. It provided the rural household with a formal means of saving their money, earning some interest and most importantly, boosted their self-confidence. The culture of savings in beneficiary households has become a new phenomenon. Many of the beneficiary respondents repaid back loans and debt they owe to relatives, banks, cooperatives, SHGs etc., with additional income from MGNREGA and after clearing their debt, they started saving their additional income in their savings account with financial institutions. With better financial security, they could now focus on better education and better health care for their children.

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